Africa RISING program coordination team retreat and PCT8 meeting

Washington DC, 2-5 June 2015

Notes compiled by Peter Ballantyne

From 2-5 June 2015, members of the Program Coordination Team (PCT) and chief scientists met in Washington. They were joined in some sessions by IFPRI staff working with the Program. The agenda, products and notes are on the wiki (<http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/retreat2015>.

The first 2 days comprised a retreat where the main focus was on the Program and its future directions. Day 3 was held at USAID and provided an opportunity to discuss ideas and plans with interested staff. The 8th PCT meeting was held on Day 4.

# Objectives

1. Draft an initial phase 2 program concept and outline note with purpose, outcomes, activities, hypotheses geo focus; plus initial 'delivery' framework
2. Take stock of current project and program strengths, weaknesses and external review comments to feed into objective 1
3. Interact with USAID about 1) AR results and promise and 2) importance of SI
4. Briefly, discuss issues and plans on the immediate/18 month phase 1 agenda
5. Agree scope of the ‘science symposium’ planned for October 2015

# Main issues discussed

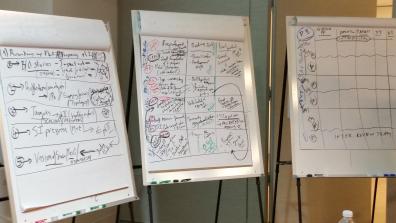
Strengths and weaknesses of the Program. Participants carried out a SWOT of the Program identifying things to keep the same, boost or reduce. Notes are available at <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/retreat2015>

Sustainable intensification assessment framework. For the past several months, the Program, USAID and other SI projects have been working on a framework to help assess and measure SI indicators. A steering committee has been set up (Peter Thorne as member) and the SI innovation lab is funding 2 postdocs to validate the initial framework in the field (early results expected July 2016). This work will be a focus of the October workshop. More information: <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/si-framework>

Phase 1 deliverables. A set of actions were identified to work on at the program level. Download the gantt chart at <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/retreat2015>

External review of the Program. This is planned to start in September with field visits to Ethiopia and West Africa. It will be completed in April 2016 after a visit to East and West Africa. More information: <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/review2015>

Science Advisory Group. It was agreed that membership needs to be updated in light of some changes. The next SAG meeting will be virtual in late June; with a face to face meeting at the October 2015 workshop.

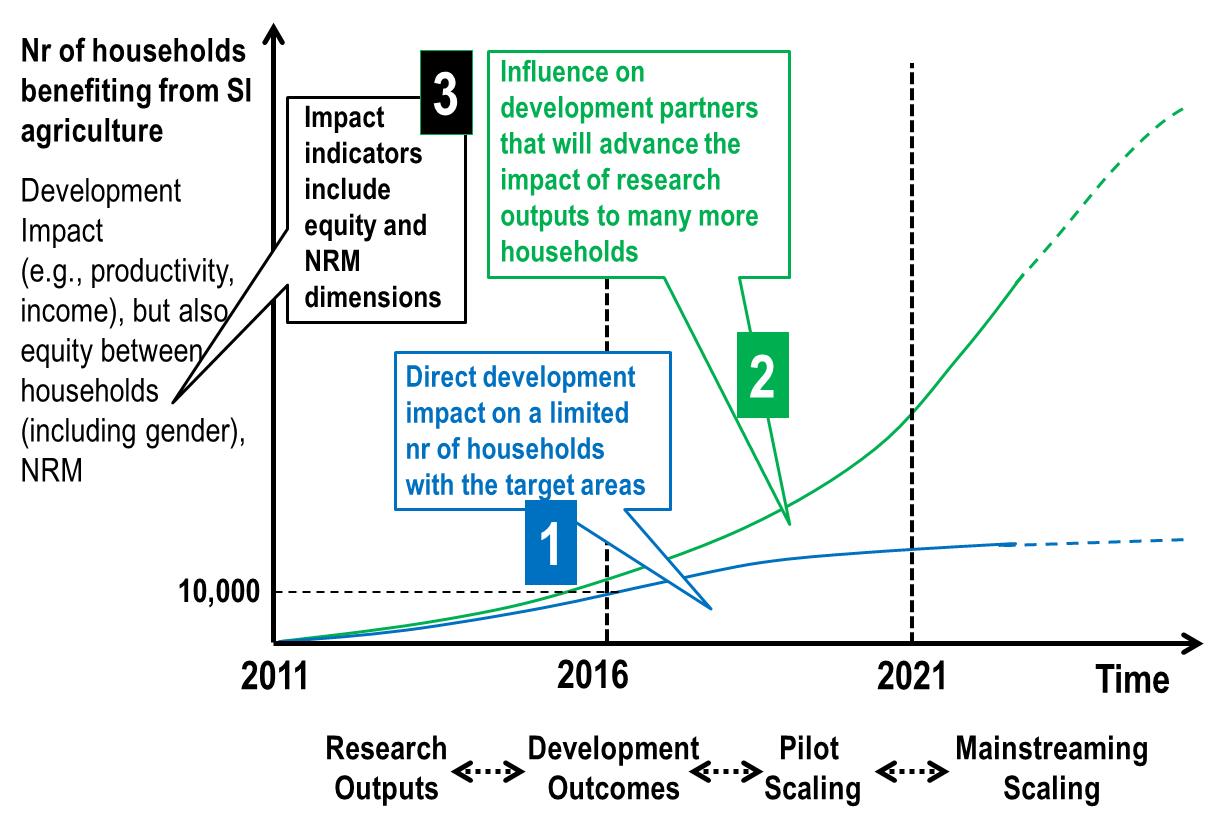
Program strategy workshop. It was agreed that a symposium should be deferred to March 2016. Instead, we should use the October dates to focus on program strategy and phase 2 planning. During the meeting, 5 work streams were identified with associated pre-, during and post-meeting activities and assignments. More information: <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/AR-strategy2015>

Program ‘systems’ approach. Along with strong R4D partnerships, it was recognized that the systems approaches adopted are major strengths of the Program. With the ongoing changes to the current systems CRPs in the CGIAR portfolio, the Program will need to very clearly articulate its specific ‘systems’ approach. This will be a focus of the October workshop.

Phase 2 ‘vision of success’ and design. Building on the SWOT exercise participants brainstormed some initial visions of success and theory of change for the Program (see below and at <http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/review2015>). This will be a focus of the October workshop.

Some initial ideas on program design – assuming the program continues as several linked projects – are also captured on the wiki (<http://africa-rising.wikispaces.com/retreat2015>). The main intention is to strengthen capacities in individual projects and add some extra support to coordination at the Program level (recognizing this is also time-demanding).

The diagram below sets out an initial (scaling) vision of success that sees partners gradually taking up and scaling out Program results.



The table below identified a simple high-level Program ‘theory of change’ aligned to the 5 SI domains emerging through the assessment framework (plus 2 cross-cutting issues). The idea is that this common framework would apply across the Program with individual projects elaborating them in more detail. It was agreed that this approach will be piloted by the Ethiopia project in June-August 2015.

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| **Impact pathway:** | | **Research activities** | **Research Outputs** | | **Development outcomes** | **Development impacts related to SI** |
| **Generic research and development outputs/ outcomes:** | | * Project work plans | | * Demand-driven options for SI * Knowledge on SI * Delivery pathways | * System improvement through SI in communities participating in Africa RISING * Enhanced capacity of partners engaged in Africa RISING | |
| **SI indicator framework** | **Producti-vity** | * Cluster of research protocols in relation to productivity | * Innovations to increase crop and livestock productivity, and input and water use efficiency | | * More feed, food fiber and fuel per farm * Extra produce for sales and income | * **Food security** * **Enhanced income** |
| **Economic** | * Cluster of research protocols in relation to factor productivity, and market/value chain options | * Innovations to increase factor productivity * Enhanced access to markets and value added options | | * More produce per unit of labor invested * More revenue per unit of produce sold | * **Poverty reduction** |
| **Environ-ment (NRM)** | * Cluster of research protocols in relation to NRM | * Innovations to increase nutrient balances, biodiversity, and tree cover on farms | | * Improved soil fertility * Reduced GHG emissions | * **Resilience of production** * **Climate change mitigation** |
| **Social** | * Cluster of research protocols in relation to social capital and collective action | * Innovations for collective action in the area of NRM, market access, etc | | * More engagement of more farming families in activities for improved livelihoods | * **Enhanced social capital, reduced conflict** |
| **Human (nutrition)** | * Cluster of research protocols in relation to nutrition | * Nutritionally optimized crop combinations | | * More protein/vitamin intake * More control by women over diets | * **Improved woman and child nutrition** |
| **Cross-cutting** | **Trade-off analysis** | * Tools for farming system and trade-off analysis | * Quantification of trade-offs | | * Enhanced synergies between interventions | * More efficient delivery of development impacts |
| **Typologies and equity** | * Tools for inclusive experimentation | * Inclusive models for technology development | | * Broad engagement of major typologies | * Enhanced equity |

# Visit to USAID

On Thursday, the team visited USAID to join a program set up by Jerry Glover. The presentation is at: <http://www.slideshare.net/africa-rising/ssar-usaid-jun2015>. The various USAID staff expressed interest in the Program and raised various issues and questions. Discussion around the new CGIAR CRP portfolio suggested that Africa RISING will need to very clearly articulate 1) its specific ‘systems’ approach (with a focus on livelihoods rather than commodity ‘farming’ systems and 2) set out some numeric targets to achieve through the wider scaling approach of the Program.

# Major milestones

1. August 2015: Discussion on farm typologies in Wageningen.
2. August 2015 (end): ToC pilot results from Ethiopia.
3. September 2015: Phase 2 design team (PCT plus chief scientists) meet in Wageningen (looking at key elements of the Program’s systems approach, scaling approach, theory of change, vision of success, hypotheses, and zone of influence ‘targets’)
4. September 2015: External review team visits Ethiopia then Ghana and Mali
5. October 2015: Program strategy workshop in Mali
6. November 2015: interim report of External review team
7. March 2016: External review team visits ESA
8. March 2016: Science symposium (tbc)
9. April 2016: External review report expected

# Participants

Jerry Glover  
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